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AUTHOR Scott, Neil H.
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ABSTRACT

Teacher induction offers emotional support to both beginning and experienced teachers. This paper examines the promotion of personal and professional well-being in beginning teachers and their experienced mentors through induction programs. Information comes from the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in New Brunswick, Canada. The program, which involves collaboration between the Department of Education, the teachers' association, and the University of New Brunswick, matches beginning teachers in each school with experienced mentor teachers for 1 year. Mentors receive 2 days of inservice training prior to the experience. Near the end of 1996 and 1997, beginning teachers and mentors who participated in the BTIP completed mailed questionnaires that examined support in the areas of system information, resources/material, instruction, emotional wellbeing, management, environment, and demonstration teaching. Emotional support ranked fourth in importance for new-to-system teachers and second for first-year teachers, but both groups asked for more emotional support. The main obstacle for teachers in both years of the program was lack of time, followed by unclear expectations of the BTIP. Despite any problems, both groups unanimously recommended continuation of the program. Most beginning teachers believed that the BTIP was beneficial because it eased anxieties and promoted personal well-being. Most mentors indicated they would act as mentors again and spoke highly of the mutual benefits of the partnership. (Contains 4 tables and 8 references.) (SM)

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Careful Planning or Serendipity?
Promoting Well-being Through Teacher Induction

A paper presented at the annual conference of the

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May 28, 1998

by

Neil H. Scott
Saint John Campus of
the University of New Brunswick
Saint John, NB
E2L 4L5

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Careful Planning or Serendipity?
Promoting Well-being Through Teacher Induction

Last week the media flashed another example of what is becoming an all-too-familiar story in North American Schools -- an armed student seeks revenge by shooting his teachers and schoolmates. This time it was in Oregon but Canada is not immune to such incidents. Repeated violence last year at Cole Harbour High School outside Halifax closed down that school on several occasions. In my home school district, lack of Federal funds was implicated in the recent closure of a "storefront" alternative school for hard-to-serve mature students who could not be served in the regular school system. With alternatives gone, some will no doubt return to over-crowded classrooms, thereby adding to the pressures on teachers. Last month, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association released a scathing report on the Foundation Years Program, a hastily conceived and poorly implemented program for grades 9 and 10 in New Brunswick. I could go on. Educational horror stories are becoming commonplace in today's educational system. The worst ones are instantly communicated by the global media; the others are communicated via the teacher grapevine.

Last week I contacted one of three counselors who attempt to meet the needs of New Brunswick's 5400 Anglophone teachers. While she could not cite statistics, her impression was that more experienced teachers are taking stress leave than ever before. She felt that teachers are experiencing additional levels of stress in the classroom because they are facing situations which they have never faced before and for which they have not been prepared to handle. It's a tough time to be a teacher! Both beginning and experienced teachers are feeling increased stress on the job! It is not surprising that well-being in the educational workplace has taken on increased importance for North American teachers of all ages.

The Potential for Induction Programs to Promote Well-being

Despite difficult times in public education, one initiative which offers emotional support to both beginning and experienced teachers is teacher induction. The overall value of induction programs is well documented in the literature (Ganser, 1996; Gordon, 1991; Gill, 1990; Kilcher, 1991). Huling-Austin (1986) outlined four goals of induction programs: to improve teaching performance, to increase retention of promising beginning teachers during the induction years, to promote the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers, and to satisfy mandated requirements related to induction and certification.

This paper will focus on Huling-Austin's third goal, the promotion of personal and professional well-being. The thesis of this paper is that induction programs promote well-being not only in beginning teachers but also in experienced teachers who act as mentors.

Educational Significance

Teacher induction received a lot of attention in the United States during the mid 1980's. After this hiatus, interest waned until recently when several states have legislated induction programs as part of their education reform packages. In Canada, although the province of Saskatchewan is an acknowledged leader, teacher induction programs have not gained wide-spread acceptance. With the prospect of increasing numbers of teachers entering the profession in the next decade, Canadian research on teacher induction deserves increased attention. The connection between teacher induction and the well-being of teachers is both educationally significant and of interest to both theoreticians and practitioners who seek cost-effective ways to improve the school workplace.

The Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

The data used to support the thesis of this paper is drawn from the author's involvement with an induction program in his home province of New Brunswick (Scott, 1997; 1996). The program is called the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP). It is the product of a cooperative effort by the provincial Department of Education, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association, and the University of New Brunswick, which I represent. Operated as a pilot project from 1993-95, the BTIP was implemented in all anglophone districts in New Brunswick in the Fall of 1995.

The program matches individual beginning teachers in each school with experienced teachers who agree to act as their mentors for one year. Mentors receive two days of inservice training at a provincial workshop held in September. Subsequently, district coordinators are expected to arrange for inservice and orientation of mentors (M) and their beginning teachers (BT) at the district level.

Grants from the provincial Department of Education and the NB Teachers' Association provide a combined total of approximately $800 per pair, based on full-time equivalent beginning teachers in the program. The district coordinators use these funds for district workshops and to pay for supply teachers which beginning teachers and mentors may use to provide some time outside their classrooms to participate in various activities such as those listed in Table 4.

The Database

Near the end of both the 1996 and 1997 school years, questionnaires were sent to all beginning teachers and mentors who participated in the BTIP. Table 1 provides a summary of the total number of participants and the percent return on the surveys.

Table 1

Participants and Respondents to BTIP Surveys

	1995-96		1996-97	
	BT	**M**	**BT**	**M**
Total no. participants	156	147	125	125
Percent response	49%	43%	76%	69%

Categorizing Teacher Induction Activities

Odell (1986) examined various induction activities which mentors provided to new teachers and reduced them to seven support categories described in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptions of Categories of Support[1]

Support Category	Category Description
System Information	Giving information related to procedures, guidelines, or expectations of the school district
Resources/Materials	Collecting, disseminating, or locating materials or other resources for use by the new teachers
Instructional	Giving information about teaching strategies or the instructional process
Emotional	Offering new teachers support through empathic listening and by sharing experiences
Classroom Management	Giving guidance and ideas related to discipline or to scheduling, planning, and organizing the school day
Environment	Helping teachers by arranging, organizing, or analyzing the physical setting of the classroom
DemonstrationTeaching	Teaching while new teacher observes (preceded by conference to identify focus of observation and followed by analysis conference)

[1] Odell (1986, p. 27)

The support category of particular interest to this discussion is listed in Odell's table as "emotional". While it appears to most directly address the issue of teacher well-being, it could be argued that support in some of the other categories will also contribute to the overall well-being of teachers. This is because such support either helps to lessen the impact of stressful situations or it provides feelings of accomplishment which enhance teachers' self-esteem.

In addition to categorizing the kinds of support mentors provided to new teachers, Odell also collected data on the frequency per semester of assistance provided to first-year teachers and new-to-system teachers. Table 3 shows the ranking of the support categories for both groups.

Table 3

Rankings of Support Categories[2]

Support	New to System Teachers				First Year Teachers			
	Semester I		Semester II		Semester I		Semester II	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
System Information	6.20	1.32	4.76	1.66	4.12	2.12	3.19	1.76
Resources/ Materials	5.60	1.21	5.81	1.22	5.38	1.51	5.26	1.60
Instructional	4.51	1.70	5.41	1.40	4.43	1.96	5.28	1.77
Emotional	4.10	1.74	4.61	1.75	4.48	1.89	4.60	1.87
Management	3.71	1.37	3.75	1.33	4.31	1.77	4.19	1.82
Environment	3.06	1.11	3.03	1.63	3.18	1.55	3.48	1.69
Demonstration Teaching	1.87	1.30	1.65	1.47	2.99	1.98	2.83	1.79

[2] Odell (1986, p. 28)

Emotional support ranked fourth for new-to-system teachers in each semester, but second for first-year teachers in semester 1 and third in semester 2. Increased demand for emotional support by both groups of teachers in the second semester implies that new teachers valued this support and felt a continuing need for it.

Odell's research provides a clear indication of the need which new teachers have for emotional support. It also provides an organizational framework for analyzing data with respect to activities reported by beginning teachers and mentors in New Brunswick.

In his survey of beginning teachers' responses to teacher induction in the province of New Brunswick, Scott (1996) asked beginning teachers which form of support they valued most highly. While the categories he used do not fit Odell's perfectly, there are interesting parallels. Fifty-two percent selected "discussion and sharing ideas"; 24% chose "encouragement"; 16% indicated "friendships"; and 8% opted for "shared resources". No one selected the remaining categories: coaching professional skills, developing self-evaluation skills, orientation to school, advice. This does not mean that the unselected forms of support were not important or that there was not a demand for support in these areas. It does, however, clearly indicate which categories of support were valued highest. Since both "encouragement" and "friendship", which together were selected by 40% of the respondents, relate to emotional well-being and hence to Odell's category of emotional support, these results add credence to the high value that beginning teachers place on those aspects of induction which promote their well-being.

Induction Activities which Promote Well-being

In New Brunswick, both the provincial and district workshops provided ideas and guidelines for appropriate professional activities for mentors and beginning teachers in their individual schools. Part of the data collected from these participants revealed the frequency and kinds of activities mutually pursued by the beginning teacher and his or her mentor. Table 4,

which follows, lists the common induction activities and compares their relative frequency in two successive years.

If we apply Odell's categories to Table 4, we can conclude that such activities as informal contacts at school (row 1), social contacts out of school (row 8), and scheduled meetings (row 9) provided a basis for emotional support, although they can also support other categories.

The norm for induction activities consisted of regular (often daily) informal contacts at school, discussions of topics which teachers consider critical, observations in other classrooms, and sharing of resources. Although classroom observations occurred less frequently, nearly every mentor and beginning teacher reported participating in the activities mentioned above. Most pairs chose to schedule regular formal meetings in addition to their briefer, daily contacts. Partners' discussions tended to focus on these topics: teaching ideas or strategies, curriculum or lesson planning, classroom management techniques, student assessment and reporting, and administrative policies and procedures. Mentors provided emotional support to their partners not only during these discussions, but also during informal contacts.

The first seven rows on Table 4 represent lower-risk activities, both from an emotional and professional perspective. A glance down the last column which reports the percentage of beginning teachers who participated in activities more than ten times, reveals high rates of participation.

Rows nine through thirteen comprise higher-risk activities -- ones which place higher emotional and professional demands on participants. Some training in the skills of classroom observation and conferencing is recommended for these activities. If one looks at the last frequency column, it becomes obvious that the high participation rates of the first seven rows have been replaced by much lower rates.

Table 4

Table comparing the relative frequency in percentages with which beginning teachers participated in specific professional activities during the 1997 BTIP compared to 1996.

Professional Activities		Frequency 0	1-5	6-10	>10	*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01
1. Make informal contacts with mentor at school	1997	1.6	3.2	4.8	90.6	*
	1996	4.6	12.3	12.3	70.4	
2. Discuss teaching ideas or strategies	1997	0	11.7	20	68.3	*
	1996	3.1	27.5	23	45.9	
3. Share or research teaching materials, books, etc	1997	1.6	20.6	33.3	44.4	*
	1996	10.7	33.7	16.8	38.2	
4. Discuss curriculum or lesson planning	1997	3.2	19.4	22.6	54.8	
	1996	10.7	33.7	19.9	35.2	
5. Discuss student assessment or reporting	1997	1.6	27.4	25.8	45.2	
	1996	12.7	30.2	23.8	33.3	
6. Discuss classroom management techniques	1997	0	20.6	27	52.4	*
	1996	6.3	36.5	27	30.2	
7. Discuss administrative policies or procedures	1997	1.6	30.6	22.6	45.2	**
	1996	6.2	40.6	21.9	23.4	
8. Meet mentor socially out of school	1997	19.4	58.1	11.3	11.3	
	1996	32.8	48.4	9.4	10.9	
9. Meet mentor in scheduled (formal) setting	1997	14.5	51.6	12.9	21	*
	1996	15.3	71.9	4.6	7.6	
10. Receive feedback about my teaching from mentor	1997	27.4	38.7	16.1	17.7	
	1996	27	50.8	15.9	6.3	
11. Mentor observes me teach	1997	46.8	35.5	8.1	9.7	
	1996	46	46	7.9	3.2	
12. Observe other colleagues teaching (not mentor)	1997	22.6	62.9	8.1	6.4	**
	1996	50	39.1	0	10.9	
13. Observe my mentor teaching in his/her own class	1997	41.9	35.5	12.9	9.7	*
	1996	51.6	40.3	0	8.1	

Table 4 provides evidence of the variety and frequency of induction activities which have the potential to promote positive interpersonal relationships and which provide both personal and professional support and encouragement.

Overall Value of the BTIP

After perusing the professional activities encouraged in the BTIP, and after having noted the distinction between lower and higher-risk activities, one might question whether these activities promoted teacher well-being. Furthermore, although the potential to promote well-being may have existed, was it realized?

Certainly beginning teachers and mentors were quite consistent in identifying issues which created obstacles for them in both years of the program. Lack of time was the biggest problem (55-60%). Unclear expectations of the BTIP caused problems for 28% of participants in 1996 but improved to 19% in 1997. Different teaching assignments (22%) and the proximity of mentors' and new teachers' rooms (15%) remained contentious issues for some.

Despite identifiable problems and an assumption that new relationships and BTIP expectations create some additional stress, both beginning teachers and mentors were virtually unanimous in recommending the continuation of the program. In two years, only one beginning teacher and two mentors have recommended its cancellation. This amounts to an overall approval rate of 98.9%. A beginning teacher in District 6 wrote, "In times of cutbacks and re-organization, I feel it needs to be said, this program is a definite success and extremely valuable." Another, in District 14, said that "the BTIP has helped to make my first-year teaching a positive and rewarding experience. I highly recommend its continuation." Many other beginning teachers expressed similar sentiments. A mentor in District 14 suggested that "[the BTIP] gives a new teacher in the school a sense of security". Several mentors commented that they regretted not having the benefit of such a program when they began teaching.

Promoting Well-being in Beginning Teachers

While the overall program may be deemed successful, we need to ask if it promoted the well-being of its participants. In the 1996-97 survey, 96% of the new teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I feel that the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher." New teachers identified a variety of ways their mentors provided support. As might be expected, their comments fall into more than one of Odell's support categories. However, the belief that their mentors' support both eased anxieties and promoted personal well-being was a common theme. The following three quotations attest to the support beginning teachers felt in the categories of systems information, resource/materials, and instruction.

> *Orientation to a new school, curriculum and staff is much less stressful and time-consuming [because of the BTIP].*
>
> *- District 8 Beginning Teacher*

> *A beginning teacher is always full of questions from where is the photocopier to how do you teach a certain math concept. Knowing there is a designated person to ask who knows you are just beginning, relieves stress and puts you at ease.*
>
> *- District 18 Beginning Teacher*

> *My mentor helped me deal with more difficult situations involving children and parents.*
>
> *- District 14 Beginning Teacher*

Many beginning teachers specifically mentioned the emotional support which mentors provided. Knowing that they were not alone was very important to beginning teachers. A District 15 beginning teacher wrote, "My mentor made me feel safe, appreciated, and competent." A beginning teacher in District 8, expressed it this way:

> *There are so many uncertainties in a new teaching situation which a good mentor can help with. My mentor answered all my questions patiently, no matter how trivial, and this made my year so much easier.*

Several mentors provided their perceptions of how their protegées had been supported by the BTIP. One remarked that her partner " doesn't get uptight about everything because we discuss it in full and any questions are answered so she knows what to expect".

While representative quotations like these clearly identified that mentors were significant providers of emotional support, they were not the sole source. For several beginning teachers, periodic meetings with other beginning teachers in their district were very important . As one District 4 beginning teacher expressed it, "[a positive aspect of the BTIP was] getting together to talk to other rookies, discussing problems and helping each other resolve them".

Promoting Well-being in Experienced Teachers

While most research on teacher induction programs focuses on the benefits to the new teachers, there is also evidence to indicate that experienced teachers who act as mentors, also benefit. Ganser (1996) supported this perspective when he emphasized that "mentoring is a form of staff development which has benefits both for the mentor and the mentee" (p. 37) . He found that mentors experienced feelings of satisfaction when helping new colleagues. In addition to learning new teaching ideas, they also found the experience of having to reflect on their own teaching journey a valuable one.

Mentors in the BTIP reacted positively to the program. Ninety-three percent of the mentors indicated they would be willing to act as mentors again. Many spoke highly of the professional quality of their protegées and of the mutual benefits of their partnerships. A mentor from District 8 expressed her feeling this way: "It has been a wonderful experience and an opportunity to reflect on my own teaching strategies and share my experiences with a beginning teacher". A colleague in the same district said, "The BTIP program is a good one and I wish I

had been partnered with another teacher when I was 23 years old and fresh out of university". Evidently mentors supported the induction program, but did it promote their well-being?

It is my contention that teacher well-being is promoted when teachers' personal or professional self-esteem is enhanced. Although many teachers in our province have achieved the highest level of certification, few career ladders or opportunities for recognition exist for them. Gaining peer recognition for a valuable service is one way to enhance professional self-esteem. Furthermore, mentors' personal self-esteem rose when they felt their contributions made a significant difference in a colleague's career. Such expressions as those which follow indicated that mentors believed both their personal and professional contributions to the BTIP were valued and valuable.

> *There were times when she was very unsure of the appropriateness/correctness/validity of some of her ideas or actions; I was able to reassure her that she was on the right track.*
>
> *- District 4 mentor*

> *[A positive aspect has been] knowing that I have made a difference in someone's career... Most of all, doing for someone else what was done for me twenty some years ago by a fellow teacher. We remain the best of friends to this day.*
>
> *- District 8 mentor*

> *I felt and feel very good about being able to help and support a fellow teacher who truly acknowledges what you are doing.*
>
> *- District 15 mentor*

> *Being there for support really makes a person feel worthwhile.*
>
> *- District 17 mentor*

Feelings of enhanced professional competency provide a second indicator of well-being. Comments from mentors suggest that the BTIP provided a worthwhile form of professional development which stimulated them professionally. As the following quotations indicate, the

BTIP provided an outlet for reflection and for professional dialogues which rarely occur in the isolation of the traditional classroom.

> *I have had to reflect on the strategies I use in teaching as well as review philosophies such as Mastery Teaching, whole language, etc. Expressing one's ideas and philosophies to another demands conviction and a belief in what one has to say.*
>
> *- District 15 mentor*

> *[The BTIP] allows for professionalism -- non-supervised.*
>
> *- District 17 mentor*

> *It gave me an opportunity to discuss educational issues/ideas, teaching methods with someone else; also gave me a chance to reflect on my own ideas and feelings about these.*
>
> *- District 18 mentor*

I also contend that whenever teachers' expressions indicate something has caused them to feel re-energized, recommitted to their profession, or simply joyful, then it has a positive effect on their well-being. These quotations illustrate such expressions.

> *[I was] inspired by new teacher's enthusiasm and energy, sharing is rewarding for us both and gives a nice aspect of camaraderie and collegiality.*
>
> *- District 4 mentor*

> *I have learned a great deal from my co-teacher. She is young, enthusiastic, gentle, and nurturing. We have worked well together as a team and I truly enjoyed being a mentor teacher.*
>
> *- District 13 mentor*

> *I found the BT's enthusiasm contagious.*
>
> *- District 4 mentor*

> *She brought many new ideas to our teaching - new/fresh perspectives. I bathed in her optimism.*
>
> *- District 15 mentor*

While I chose to separate the ways the BTIP enhanced mentors' well-being into three categories, it should be obvious that there was a certain synergy at work. Although the evidence is anecdotal, each quotation represents many situations in which the well-being of mentors in the teacher induction program was enhanced as a result of their involvement.

Both Careful Planning and Serendipity

The BTIP in New Brunswick is an example of a carefully planned attempt to retain higher percentages of new teachers in anticipation of large-scale teacher retirements. Its development resulted from a concern for the impact on the education system of extensive staff changes in a relatively brief period. The motivation was primarily for the integrity of the educational system, although that includes teachers and students. While BTIP organizers anticipated benefits to beginning teachers, they have been pleasantly surprised by the strong positive response to this program by mentors, principals, and district officials. That is where the serendipity factor enters.

The BTIP has made it possible for limited numbers of experienced teachers to systematically participate in professional activities which build collegial relationships, share teaching resources and strategies, tackle educational dilemmas, and observe others practice the craft of teaching. Teachers always sought such opportunities, but rarely, if ever, found them. Most taught (and still teach) in isolation from their peers. The New Brunswick teachers induction program has provided some teachers with new opportunities to feel valued, to improve their sense of professional competency, and to become recommitted to their profession. That was serendipity!

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